

EGYPTIAN HALL, Piccadilly.

DRAWING ROOM. *Nov 16th 1882.*

LESSEE

MR. HARRY HAWKE.

HERR CARL HANSEN,

(THE CELEBRATED DANISH MESMERIST,) WILL GIVE HIS

REMARKABLE EXPERIMENTS
IN ANIMAL MAGNETISM,

With Explanations as to the Extent and Influence of Mesmerism.

These experiments HERR CARL HANSEN has produced by special command, before their Imperial Majesties, the late Emperor of Russia, as well as the present Emperor and Empress of Russia and the whole court of St. Petersburg, likewise before H. M. the King of Saxony, and many German Courts and Dignitaries, and nearly all the German and Belgian Universities.

Recent Bio-magnetic Experiments in Germany.-By Herr Carl Hansen.

Written by EDMUND SHERIDAN PURCELL.

THE attempts recently made in London by Mr. W. I. Bishop at "Thought-reading"—a designation as misleading as it is inaccurate—presented, in the feebleness of their results and in the uncertainty of operation, a striking contrast to experiments somewhat similar in character carried on, with almost unbroken success, week after week during the last two years in Germany. These experiments in bio-magnetism have been tested and verified over and over again by men of science, by university professors, and by doctors practising at the hospitals, and witnessed by tens of thousands in all the chief cities of Germany, and unquestionably prove that the operator possesses over those he operates upon full and supreme mastery: (1) over the muscles; (2) over the senses; (3) over the imagination; and (4) over the will.

Over the muscles his power is shown by reducing the bodies of his "subjects" to a state of perfect rigidity, impervious to sensation. Over the senses he exerts like mastery, inasmuch as he makes at will men, sane of mind and sharp of sight, believe and declare that the brilliance of the noonday sun is midnight darkness, that the boards of the stage, touched by their hands and feet, is a running stream, into which they plunge, striking out boldly as in swimming. The epicure, delicate of palate, eats, at the magnetiser's bidding, a raw potato as a ripe pear. Those under his influence hear, in the calm clear sky, the roll of thunder, by others unheard. An odour, like unto that of the missiles once but too commonly flung at the heads of unpopular candidates at the hustings, is to them sweet as the violet in spring. Over the imagination or mind an equal power is shown, for the operator inspires those he operates upon with his own ideas, makes them think his thoughts and utter them, dream dreams by night of his fabrication. And, lastly, over the will of his "subjects" his dominion is supreme, for he not only suspends the action of their will, but substitutes his own for theirs, making them not merely passive recipients, but active agents, carrying out his behests in thought, word, and deed.

This bare statement of facts—for facts they are, if human testimony the most diversified, the most skilled, and the most spontaneous be worth a brass farthing—is yet so startling as to excite at the first blush a not unnatural incredulity. But incredulity, pushed beyond its legitimate limits, is but too apt, like superstition, not only to retard the march of science, but to put scientific discoveries, as it were, under an interdict.

For every statement which I advance I have under my hand evidence which I have carefully sifted and weighed. In this cause I shall cite only such witnesses as are, by their repute and scientific attainments, like Cæsar's wife, beyond suspicion. If the sceptical temper be the frame of mind which best befits scientific inquiry, yet the *Zeit-Geist*, as the Germans call it, forbids us, warned by the almost inconceivable prejudices of former times, to deny the possibility of the existence of laws of nature hitherto undiscovered, or unsuspected even. With a mind open, then, to conviction let us examine the evidence as to the recent experiments in bio-magnetism, which in Germany have been tested, verified, and accepted, though scientific men have not as yet determined under what law of nature the results obtained are to be placed.

It is, however, for many reasons important to show, before I proceed further, that scepticism as well as superstition has its victims, for the mind which is incapable of making admissions is not open to proof. Men of science are more especially jealous of making admissions, which might imply that they do not already occupy the high pedestal of complete and perfect knowledge. They fear ridicule far more than they fear the devil.

Perhaps it is owing to the existence of such a fear among the purveyors of news in England that, notwithstanding our intimate relations—social and intellectual—with Germany, not a word should as yet have reached this country as to the extraordinary experiments in bio-magnetism which, during the past year or two, have excited such widespread and intense interest among Germans of every rank and condition in life.

It may not, therefore, be without interest for the English public to learn now for the first time some, at least, of the results of these experiments in bio-magnetism, witnessed not only by large masses of the people in every class in society, but tested by men of science, professors in German universities, physicists of reputation, doctors attached to public hospitals, and by independent witnesses of good name and repute.

The experimenter, who is not a German, but a Dane by birth, commenced his recent experiments in bio-magnetism—after a futile attempt at obtaining a hearing in Holland—at Leipsic in the early part of the year 1879. At first he met with a most hostile reception, and was roundly

taxed in not a few newspapers with being an impostor and a swindler. His answer was, "Come and see my experiments and judge by the results." It is not necessary to record here the wordy warfare which ensued between those who had witnessed the astounding results of the magnetic influence possessed by the experimentalist and those who denounced them *a priori* as impossible, declaring that whatever unaccountable effects had been produced must need be the work of imposture.

Passing over this early stage of passionate recrimination, let me call up at once witnesses on behalf of the celebrated magnetiser who has excited such interest and sensation in Germany. For before all things it is necessary, in order to obtain for these experiments in bio-magnetism an impartial hearing in England, to establish the evidence and credibility of the experimentalist. It is likewise necessary in a country like Germany, where so many half-mad philosophers flourish, that the witnesses themselves should be above even the shadow of suspicion. Such a witness is the well-known Professor Matthiessen, of the University of Rostock. His letter addressed to Herr Professor Carl Hansen, reads in English as follows:—

"Rostock, 20th July, 1879.

"Most Honoured Sir,—I cannot forego the present opportunity of expressing to you my special thanks, as well as my special recognition of your performances, and of your capacity in carrying out bio-magnetical experiments. I was one of six persons experimented on yesterday during your lecture in the presence of a large circle of scientific notabilities.

"I have the honour to remain,

"LUDWIG MATTHIESSEN,

"Professor der Physik on der Universitat."

—Another such a witness is Dr. Thiersch, Professor of Medicine at Leipsic, and perhaps the most eminent authority in Germany on physiology, who likewise vouches for the genuineness of the results of the experiments which he, in the presence of twenty or thirty men of science, or practical doctors, put to every known test. If imitation be the sincerest form of flattery, Herr Hansen has every reason to be gratified, for, on his departure from Leipsic, Dr. Thiersch practised in the hospital and elsewhere the experiments which he had witnessed, and with no small success, especially on those persons who had previously been operated upon by Herr Hansen. Failing, however, after three or four weeks in one or two special cases, Dr. Thiersch invited Herr Hansen to return to Leipsic, and the persons in question being brought again under his magnetic influence, became afterwards susceptible once more to the power of Dr. Thiersch. Besides the above, Professor Zollner, the eminent physicist, Professor Weigert, Professor Gebhardt, Dr. Hermann, and many other men of like character and standing, who can neither deceive nor easily be deceived, have witnessed the experiments of Herr Hansen and vouch for their successful results.

It may be as well to add that Herr Carl Hansen is personally known to many people of standing in England, and among others to the writer of this paper, as a man of good repute, high character, and sound judgement.

One broad fact I beg my readers to bear in mind, for it speaks volumes. It is this: for upwards of two years, day by day and week after week, these experiments in bio-magnetism have been carried on in city after city throughout Germany with unbroken success, in the face of day, and before a critical public, and in the presence of an enlightened Press. To the best of my belief those experiments are still being carried on in Germany. At the close of last year Herr Hansen was performing his experiments and accumulating fresh evidence at Posen; a letter which I sent last Christmas to that address was, however, returned to me three or four months later; but this circumstance, I fancy, only shows that he had passed beyond the limited range allowed in pursuit by the sleepy German Post-Office to letters and newspapers.

Another class of spontaneous evidence, if it may be so termed, especially recommends itself to the public mind. The editor, for instance, of one of the leading papers of Dresden had publicly denounced Herr Hansen's extraordinary experiments as resting upon deceit and collusion; the doughty magnetiser resolved at once to beard the lion in his den. Walking unexpectedly into the newspaper office, he offered to put the genuineness of his power to a practical test, and almost in the twinkling of an eye, editor, writers, and compositors, and even a stray postman, were thrown into the magnetic trance, and forced to do Herr Hansen's bidding. The next day the editor of the *Dresden Nachrichten* publicly declared his belief in the genuineness of the experiments performed on his own people, adding "that the visit of Professor Hansen to the newspaper office was one of the most interesting and most convincing which we ever had the pleasure of receiving."

Another piece of evidence of a like character, but still more complete and conclusive, was given at Leipsic, where Herr Hansen's experiments in bio-magnetism excited a fierce and vehement controversy. The editor of the *Leipziger Nachrichten*, with a judicial impartiality more characteristic of English than of German newspapers, made the following announcement:—

"The remarkable experiments, which the magnetiser Hansen has lately performed here, have been regarded by many of those who witnessed them as the effects of a force of nature hitherto but little understood, which we call magnetism; whilst, on the contrary, many others looked upon these performances as the results of a secret understanding between the magnetiser and the magnetised. In order to come to the bottom of this question, we deputed one of our staff, Herr V. Muller, to allow himself to be magnetised, and to give a faithful report of the result."

From this report, published in the *Leipziger Nachrichten*, it appears Herr Volkmar Muller was magnetised on three different occasions, and in the magnetic trance was compelled against his will to open or close his eyes or hands, or to follow the magnetiser up and down the room. Pressing his hand on the "patients" forehead, the magnetiser deprived him of the power of speech and of memory, so that he could neither pronounce nor remember his own name. Finally, his body was reduced to such a perfect state of rigidity as, when placed with the head on one chair and the feet on another, to bear on the belly the weight of the magnetiser. "From my horizontal position," says the reporter, "I looked with tranquil mind on the singular gymnastic exercises performed on my body by Herr Hansen."

These experiments were witnessed by Professor Zollner, Professor Fechner, Herr Oscar von Hoffman, Dr. Max Lange, among many other credible competent witnesses. Herr Volkmar Muller himself admits that he was originally among those who had the greatest doubts both as to the theory and the practice of Herr Hansen, but is now convinced from personal experience that the results of these experiments, however accounted for, are beyond doubt or question.

This judgement has since been fully confirmed, and is now generally accepted in Germany.

One scene which occurred at the university town of Greifswald, however, I must recount more fully. The hall where the experiment was to take place was crowded by students and professors.



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The public feeling seems to have set strongly against Herr Hansen, for, in spite of the favourable reports which had appeared in the newspapers of the neighbouring university town of Rostock, he had no sooner made his appearance than he was met with the most insulting shouts of derision. In addressing the noisy assembly, Herr Hansen remarked that "for his experiments in so-called animal magnetism he had a special predilection for university towns, because he had always reckoned on a favourable reception from professors and students naturally interested in scientific investigation; but to judge from the reception given to me to-night," he added sarcastically, "I cannot but conclude that the university term is over, and that, therefore, very few university men are here to-night."

These words excited a tremendous outburst of indignation, but eventually among those who presented themselves to be operated upon was the leader of the opposition party, the captain of the Pomerania, as the leading society of the students is called. He was a tall and sturdy fellow, and, as luck would have it, he turned out, to the delight of the public, to be highly susceptible to magnetic influence, and by a few passes of the magnetiser's hands was thrown into a trance. In punishment for his offence he was bidden by the magnetiser to kneel down and pray, together with one of his fellow-students, and afterwards to get up and dance the polka. Then they were given raw potatoes, which they ate with avidity, smacking their lips on being told that they were delicious peaches. The magnetiser then told this strapping young student that he was a nurse, and placing a pillow folded in a cloth in his arms the student, with an expression of earnest care on his face, dandled the "baby." The success of the experiments had a magical effect on the audience, who were as hearty in their applause as they had been violent in their opposition.

A somewhat similar result occurred, as Professor Zollner, in a recently published work relates, at Stockholm, where, on a former occasion, Herr Hansen had magnetised a number of students; but their comrades, becoming angry, attempted a rescue, and stormed the stage with the intention of inflicting personal violence on the magnetiser. In order, however, to resist the attack, he whispered to the magnetised students that the "arch-fiend" was advancing against them. A battle royal ensued, and the magnetised students, at the bidding of the magnetiser, drove off with blows their comrades who had come to their rescue. This experiment clearly shows that the operator is able not only to control the will, but to inspire with his own ideas the mind of the person operated on. Had the student, under the impression that he was attacked by the "arch-fiend," been ordered by the magnetiser to draw a revolver and shoot his comrade, would he have obeyed the order?

So supreme a control, exercised by one man over the will of another as would be implied by compulsory obedience to such a command, gives rise to considerations so far reaching that I thought it as well to put the question direct to the magnetiser himself, who was at the time carrying on his experiments at Breslau; and in reply he wrote to me as follows:—

"It is certain that there is no limit to the control exercised over an individual whilst under the influence of bio-magnetism, and he would of course carry into effect any behest from the operator, whether criminal or not, but evidently all moral responsibility would rest with the operator."

The question of moral as well as of legal responsibility incurred in the practice of bio-magnetism raises issues of such a character as must sooner or later attract general attention; but before briefly alluding to these considerations, I wish to give one or two illustrations of what the Germans call "die Fernwirkung" of the magnetic power, or the effects produced by the magnetiser on persons at a distance. These effects, on psychological grounds, are of the highest interest and importance, as showing that the active agent in producing the magnetic trance, and in controlling the mind and the action of the patient, is the will of the magnetiser.

A remarkable instance of this kind occurred at Berlin, in the house of a well-known jeweller, whom Herr Hansen had frequently magnetised, and in whom he noticed a peculiar susceptibility to magnetic influence. Dining on one occasion with the jeweller, his family, and two other persons, in the parlour behind the shop, the magnetiser was asked, during the temporary absence of the jeweller to attend to a customer, whether his power could be exercised over persons at a distance or in another room. His reply was, that such cases, though not frequent, had undoubtedly occurred in his practice. He offered to put his power to the proof, and requested the company to name some action which, by the exercise of his will, he should compel the absent jeweller to perform. One of those present proposed that the jeweller should be made to bring three of the most valuable of the diamonds from the shop, and on his return place them in the magnetiser's hands. Herr Hansen then concentrated his will to effect the proposed purpose, and laid his open hand on the table. No sooner had the stranger left the shop than the jeweller was heard to open and shut a glass case, and to approach with uncertain steps to the door, which he opened, and, to the astonishment of all present, went straight up to the magnetiser and laid in his open hand three diamond rings. The jeweller did all this in a state of unconsciousness similar to that of those who, as I have related above, under magnetic influence, ate raw potatoes under the impression that they were peaches. Only when restored to his normal condition by the act of the magnetiser did the jeweller become conscious of that he had done. Unconscious of his act, he was, of course, unable to account for the motives which prompted it. In the magnetic trance in which he was thrown some motives must have presented themselves to the will suggesting the act. Were the motives supplied by the magnetiser in the neighbouring room, were ideas of generosity excited in the mind of one man by the will and imagination of another, as the mind of the student at Stockholm was inspired with the apprehension that his comrade was the "arch-fiend?"

If the will of the operator be the active agent in producing the magnetic trance, it seems to me obvious that distance cannot materially weaken its effect. Indeed, it is on record that Herr Hansen, on one occasion, operating at Berlin, threw a gentleman at Leipsic into a trance: but it appears that this effect can only be produced on persons who, on previous occasions, have been brought under the magnetiser's influence by personal contact. It is also to be noted that not every one is susceptible to magnetic influence; indeed, out of every thirty persons who present themselves at a public meeting to be magnetised it is estimated that, on an average, not more than ten or twelve could be readily and successfully operated upon. In some cases the consent of the person to be mesmerised is not necessary, since there are persons so susceptible as to be thrown into a magnetic trance by the mere act of the magnetiser's will. The bio-magnetic influence gained over any person in the first instance can at any time, within four weeks, be regained in an instant, and for the most part so rapidly that the patient has no time to prevent it by flight.

Herr Hansen does not profess or pretend to know the nature of the power which he is enabled

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by the action of his will, with or without external manifestations, to exercise over others: his belief that it is latent in every one more or less, and, like the art of writing or the gift of oratory, is capable by prolonged and resolute practice, as in his own case, of an abnormal development.

The recent experiments in Germany afford an ample mass of well-attested facts for the scientific inquirer; it is his business now to discover the laws under which the bio-magnetic influence acts, and to distinguish between what is essential and what accidental in producing the influence both in the magnetiser and the magnetised. One difficulty, especially in Germany, I fear, in the way of a thorough scientific investigation into bio-magnetism, lies in the fact that Herr Hansen himself is not reputed as a man of science. He is a mere outsider who presumes to discover facts hitherto unknown, or disregarded, or denied by two many of the pompous bespectacled professors of science in a land where they arrogate to themselves the exclusive right of scientific discovery. In a word they are jealous of the thoughtful Dane, who has not graduated in their school, but whose field of observation has been the world. A brief sketch of Herr Hansen's career will help the reader who knows anything of the learned world, or more properly coteries, of Germany, to understand the difficulties he had to overcome, in the first instance, to obtain a fair consideration of the experiments he presented to German science.

Born at Odense, in Denmark, in the year 1833, Carl Hansen witnessed as a boy experiments in animal magnetism performed by the physician, to whom he was related, once or twice a week on a girl for the benefit of her health. Like all children he imitated the experiments he witnessed, and succeeded in producing the magnetic trance. In his eighteenth year he was sent to pursue his studies at Copenhagen, where he passed his examination with some distinction. During the year he was at Copenhagen Carl Hansen often magnetised his fellow-students: he used frequently to enter their rooms at night when they were asleep, and, laying his hands on their heads, endeavoured to inspire their minds with all kinds of thoughts and ideas which were passing through his own brain. In the morning he would beg them to relate their dreams, and in every instance they corresponded with the ideas which were in his own mind at the time he had magnetised them. In 1858 Herr Hansen went to Australia, where he spent between five and six years in commercial pursuits, but in his leisure hours he carried on his bio-magnetic experiments, or studied mechanics and electricity, to which he was much addicted. He was in the habit of delivering lectures on electricity and animal magnetism. He then went to Mauritius, where he founded a school of mesmerism, and was elected honorary member of the *Société Magnetologique* of Port Louis. From Mauritius he went to the Cape of Good Hope, and carried on his experiments in the various colonies, and founded a mesmeric society. At the desire of Colonel Maclean, the then Governor of Caffre Land, he magnetised several of the different chiefs. In 1863 Herr Hansen left Africa and returned to Denmark, where, as well as in Norway and Sweden, he carried on public experiments in bio-magnetism with great success. This unsettled kind of life, however, was not pleasing to Herr Hansen's friends; he was therefore, induced to give it up and embark again in commercial pursuits, which brought him to London and Paris. At last the ruling passion, being strong in life as well as in death, induced Herr Hansen to resume the occupation of his early years; he accordingly gave up business, and in the beginning of the year 1879 went to Holland with the intention of devoting all his mind and time to the study and practice of bio-magnetism. In some of the Dutch cities which he visited he was listened to with great attention; in others, on the contrary, he was met with a doggedly hostile opposition, which induced him to leave Holland for Germany in the hope that among a more enlightened and cultured people he might be enabled to carry on his bio-magnetic experiments with greater success. "In this hope," he writes himself to a distinguished German Professor, "I am glad to be able to declare that I have not been mistaken."

It is, however, but fair to our Dutch neighbours to confess that in Germany, in the first instance, Herr Hansen was met with a noisy and violent opposition; he was denounced in the public Press as a cheat and swindler; he was sneered at by learned professors, and too often refused a decent hearing. But he faced interruptions of the most violent character with a cool, indomitable, almost British pluck; and often compelled his loudest opponents to confess to his power.

Herr Hansen, before leaving Dresden, had, in vindication of his character, to prosecute two men—one a Jew and one a sorry Christian—for attempting to extort money on the false pretence that they had, to his knowledge, aided him in his experiments by pretending to be magnetised. They were sentenced respectively to six and nine months' imprisonment. The trial excited great sensation in that somewhat sleepy German city, and fully established the magnetiser's credibility. Leaving, towards the close of the year, North Germany, Herr Hansen passed to Munich, the seat of the fine arts and the city of palaces, which arose almost like magic in the reign of King Louis, famous alike for his love of the arts, of poetry and of Lola Montes. Here Herr Hansen was received with open arms, not only by the learned Faculties, but by fair dames and damsels of high degree, and was publicly crowned, after the German fashion, with a wreath of flowers, and presented, more in accordance with Russian than German practice, with a valuable diamond ring in recognition of his successful experiments.

Herr Hansen is next heard of as filling nightly a large theatre at Vienna with crowds of enthusiastic witnesses to his performances in bio-magnetism.

For all practical purposes, however, the experiments of Herr Hansen have already more than sufficed. By the force of his will he has called public attention to bio-magnetism; by his earnestness of purpose he has inspired others with his own enthusiasm; he has accumulated facts, well attested and examined over and over again; and, lastly, the gods be praised, he has no pet theory of his own. He is but what he claims to be, a simple pioneer in the field of scientific investigation. Englishmen, as a rule, are too deeply occupied in practical affairs, too keenly interested in higher politics, too often distracted by the noble war of parties, to give early attention to alleged or uncertain discoveries in matters of a scientific character. It is our habit to wait until the stamp of authority has been set on a discovery, and then our anxiety to know all about it is as lively as it is impatient.

What lends their special psychological interest to these so-called bio-magnetic experiments is the fact, if fact it be, of the supreme domination of the will of one man over that of another. This strange and subtle power is new to our philosophy. How it is obtained, and how conveyed, under what law of nature it is to be placed, we must leave to science to determine; but its presence opens up a large question with issues vaster than can be fitly discussed within the limits of the present paper. It seems to me, however, that I am not doing amiss now in bringing before the English public experiments which they ought to know something of, even if only because they touch upon one of the unsolved riddles of life.